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Books—Mural Decoration by Edwin H. Blashfield
Lent by Mr. Everett Morss, of Boston

NEWTON H. CARPENTER, Director of the Art Institute of Chicago was fortunate in securing for exhibition mural paintings by Edwin H. Blashfield, in which a union of portraiture and symbolism has been successfully accomplished. The work consists of three oblong panels executed for the home of Mr. Everett Morss, of Boston, Mass., presumably the house at No. 115 Commonwealth Avenue. It is interesting to note that this successful application of family portraiture to mural decoration is found in the residence of a thorough Bostonian. Mr. Morss was born in Boston in 1865, graduated from the English High School and later (1881) from the "Tech." He began and has conducted his business career in the Massachusetts capital. He is a member of the "Tech." Corporation and of its executive committee.

Mr. Blashfield's "family portrait" murals are entitled "Hospitality," appropriate for the inclusion of members of the family in a welcoming group;

"Books" and "Music." Thus we have expressions of liberality and refinement. In "Hospitality" a young woman is the central figure. Her attitude is that of expectant, dignified greeting. Before her is a young boy. To one side of her stands a youth holding upon a tray a flagon, to the other side a young woman bearing a small ship—possibly the "nef" from an antique English silver service such as in the olden time always was found on the sideboards of England. A gracious spirit of welcome pervades this "Hospitality." It suggests dignified entertainment.

"Books" lacks a central figure, but not a centre of interest. It is at once that the vision is caught by the female figure gracefully, absorbingly inclined over a tome which she holds open on her lap and from which she reads while the others in the picture listen. She is placed in the extreme right of the decoration, yet immediately controls the eye until it gradually seeks out the rest of the composition.



Music—Mural Decoration by Edwin H. Blashfield
Lent by Mr. Everett Morss, of Boston

In "Books" it is the reader who attracts attention. In "Music" it is the two young women who are listening. One of them, however, has been playing a lute, which she holds upright against her arm. She and the other prominent listener are to the right of the composition. To the left sits a young woman plucking a keyed psaltery. All three decorations have great charm and are in every way suitable to the intimate walls of a home.

They are only another of Mr. Blashfield's successes in handling themes in which the real combines with the ideal. In some of his public decorations he has gone even further and combined a realistic present with an idealistically interpreted past without marring the symbol or allegory intended to be conveyed. To this ability of Mr. Blashfield's in introducing modern figures with those of a past age into the same composition a great artist, now dead—John La Farge—called attention when Mr. Blashfield was exhibiting his decora-

tion executed for the assembly room in the Wisconsin State Capitol, at Madison. Conspicuous in this decoration are the figure of Wisconsin, allegories of the two Great Lakes that wash the shores of the State and an allegory of the Mississippi. About these are grouped figures of the early explorers. But, as John La Farge pointed out at the time, there also are soldiers of the civil war in the composition and, another call to modernity, the figure of a messenger and interpreter of the present and possibly of the future.

With this figure as an escort—I believe Mr. La Farge used the word *cortège*—came lumbermen, farmers and miners and so up to date a personality as a child carrying a tin can. All these forms of today were interpreted almost as realistically as if they had stepped out of a camera, while the forms relating to the past were painted with a subtlety of outline that conveyed a suggestion of events gone by and only dimly recalled.